

January 26, 2021

His Worship, John Tory, Mayor of Toronto
Chair, Executive Committee
100 Queen St. West,
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Dear Mr. Mayor and members of the Executive Committee,

Re: Item EX20.1, Community Crisis Support Service Pilot

I am writing in support of the Community Crisis Support Service Pilot. This is an important first step in ensuring people in crisis receive the healthcare and supports they need.

We are all aware of the tragic outcomes that can occur when people with mental illness do not get the care that they need and experience a crisis in the community. Underfunding of community mental health and support services means that the police have become the de facto frontline responders to these critical events. While police are skilled and essential professionals, they are not health care experts. In the same way that a person having a heart attack is met with a health response, people experiencing a mental health emergency should be met with emergency health care. For years, CAMH and our mental health system partners have been advocating for measures that advance health care in the community for people in crisis.

The Community Crisis Support Service Pilot will bridge a gap in Toronto's crisis response system by positioning community health providers as first responders to individuals in mental health crisis in the community. Multi-disciplinary teams of professionals that reflect the communities they serve will be best suited to address the unique needs of different populations – particularly those serving Indigenous and Black communities. Ease of access and 24 hour availability will be central to success. It is important that Toronto Police Services support the Community Crisis Support Service Pilot, without being directly involved. People experiencing a mental health crisis must trust that their health care needs are the priority in order for the Pilot to be successful.

Mr. Mayor and Members of the Executive Committee, I encourage you and your colleagues on City Council to fund and implement the Community Crisis Support Services Pilot. This initiative, along with investment in mental health and support services from all levels of government will be a strong signal that we are aligned in our belief that Mental Health *is* Health.

Sincerely,



Catherine Zahn, MD, FRCP(C)
President and CEO